

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 7, 2005

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*Statehouse, Room 157*

*Indianapolis, Indiana 46204*

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## **"SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS" DINNER SCHEDULED**

INDIANAPOLIS—State Rep. Vernon G. Smith (D-Gary) announced the "Spirit of Christmas" Dinner will be served on Christmas Day from 1-4 p.m. at the Ivy Tech Gary Campus building, 1440 E. 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

This will be the 18<sup>th</sup> year that Dr. Smith, Joyce Washington-Price, Dwight Pointer, and Gelone Broadnax have hosted the event for local residents in need of assistance, senior citizens and those who are lonely and unable to celebrate the holiday season with family or friends.

"There is a great need in our community for nourishment, both in the form of food and in the form of human warmth," said Dr. Smith. "The problem of homelessness seems to grow each year. These individuals need a good meal and a warm place to be on Christmas. What they need even more is the love of others. Our sisters and brothers need to feel wanted and needed, a feeling of value. We all need this or we will wither like a plant without water.

"The 'Spirit of Christmas' Dinner is very rewarding for all of the volunteers who participate," explained Dr. Smith. "By respecting the human dignity of those in greatest need, we find our own value. We come to the realization that we also are wanted and needed in this life."

The dinner is intended primarily for residents of Gary, New Chicago, Lake Station and Hobart. However, Dr. Smith said anyone in need, throughout the region, is welcome. He plans to prepare enough food to feed 500 people.

For dinner reservations, for bus transportation to the dinner or to volunteer, call Dr. Smith at his home, (219) 887-2046, or phone his office, (219) 980-7120. In particular, Dr. Smith said there is a great need for volunteers for setup prior to the Christmas Dinner and for cleanup on Dec. 26.

The dinner is held in memory of Rep. Smith's mother, the Rev. Julia E. Smith, former pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, and Patricia Tillotson, who was an educator in the Gary School Corporation system. Ms. Tillotson was a dedicated volunteer for the "Spirit of Christmas" Dinner and many other charitable causes. Rev. Smith died in 1991. Ms. Tillotson passed away eight years ago.

Dr. Smith and Dwight Pointer initiated the "Spirit of Christmas" Dinner in response to a need they found within the community.

-30-

***This release can be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.IN.gov/H14>***

